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1962/09/14

Zakharov's Report to Khrushchev
14 September 1962

Top Secret
Only Copy

Personally
to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev

[signature in the left margin, apparently Khrushchev's, dated [[14]] September 1962]

I report:

The United States of America is conducting intensive air and naval patrols around Cuba, devoting special attention to reconnoitering Soviet ships.

The leader of the Cuban counterrevolutionaries Juan Manuel Salvat, speaking at a press conference on 7 September, stated that any ship under a communist flag which is noted in Cuban territorial waters will be considered a military target regardless of nationality and subject to attack without warning.

At the present time Soviet ships approaching Cuba are being systematically overflown by American aircraft. Up to 50 cases of overflights of 15 Soviet ships have been recorded in September. The overflights are made at dangerously low altitudes (50-100 meters).

In order to ensure the security of our ships from the piratical acts by American aircraft and Cuban counterrevolutionaries we request permission:

1. For each passenger ship traveling to Cuba with personnel and weapons of a unit (formation) set up for self-defense, besides the personal side arms, which are on each ship - two twin-mounted 23-mm anti-aircraft guns with ammunition for two units of fire (2,400 shells). These guns are in the inventory of the Airborne Forces and are a powerful means of combating both aerial targets at ranges of up to 2500 meters at altitudes up to 1500 meters as well as lightly-armored surface ships at ranges up to 2000 meters. In practice firings the gun penetrated armor 25 mm thick. A gun's crew is three men. Thirty-four ships need to be armed in all.

2. To approve instructions to each ship captain and chief of the military contingent to protect the transport ship from the piratical acts of American aircraft, surface ships, and submarines and Cuban counterrevolutionaries during the crossing by sea.

M. Zakharov [signature]

14 September 1962 S. P. Ivanov [signature]

[Written in a different hand, perhaps by Ivanov: "Reported to the Minister of Defense in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff and the Chief of the Main Operations Directorate 27.9.62" [[illegible signature]]

[Source: Volkogonov Collection, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Reel 17, Container 26, Translated by Gary Goldberg for the Cold War International History Project and the National Security Archive]